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Kant and Cosmopolitanism: Is Cosmopolitanism Naive?

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Cosmopolitanism is sometimes criticized for its ignoring of individual and communal relationships in our particular lives. Strict cosmopolitans in the moral sphere such as Singer, O'Neil and Nussbaum claim that our duties to others should not be limited to local people or compatriots. Contrary to this stance, anti-cosmopolitans such as MacIntyre believe that there cannot be any obligations without close, communal relationships. In this paper, I shall try to give some contribution to the above debate through Kant's cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan education by tapping its potential for the contemporary world. Kant's cosmopolitanism has closeness with respecting the humanity of a person as both an end and a means to an end, and has three different dimensions: (1) the individual, (2) the national, (3) the cosmopolitan society. These three dimensions of cosmopolitanism consist of teleological and pluralistic elements and manifest itself in dynamic movement in terms of thinking and acting. Therefore cosmopolitanism is not a static and naive idea but regulative one, which can include animals and plants, and which can be an active guide that helps us to communicate and understand each other.

INTRODUCTION

We cannot steer clear from linguistic issues when trying to understand other cultures in this multicultural world. However, when our starting point involves a discussion of language, it seems difficult to broach the theme of cosmopolitanism because there is no language that is not in some way local. No language exists that might be thought of as common or universal. Nevertheless, if we accept that the multicultural world is not static and fixed, but rather active and fluid, then we cannot ignore the theme of cosmopolitanism. In other words, if we admit that multicultural approaches favor openness, then we cannot exclude cosmopolitanism from our thinking. I think examining the concept of cosmopolitanism continues to contribute to an understanding of others and cultures in a multicultural world.

Cosmopolitanism is sometimes criticized for ignoring individual and communal relationships in the particular lives of individuals. Strict cosmopolitans in the moral sphere such as Singer (2002), O'Neil (2000) and Nussbaum (1996) claim that our duties to others should not be limited to locals or compatriots. Contrary to this stance, anti-cosmopolitans such as MacIntyre

(1995) believe that there cannot be any obligations without close, communal relationships. In this paper, I will examine Kant's cosmopolitanism both because it forms the basis for recent arguments on the topic and because it helps us to consider cosmopolitanism comprehensively. I will argue that Kant's cosmopolitanism is not static but is itself subject to dynamic movements.

UNIVERSAL COSMOPOLITANISM?: FROM A KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Possibility beyond local community

The word cosmopolitanism, which combines etymologically the words *kosmos* and *polites*, takes us beyond the local. Considered this way, there is more scope for thinking about what it might mean. We usually live in one nation or region, belong to it (of course, there are some exceptions: stateless persons for instance) and spend much time. Cultures and values in these communities can be quite different and diverse from each other. However, is it possible to imagine values or thoughts that are not bound to one's own community?

To begin with, there is the parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke (Luke, 10, 25–37). The help offered to the injured Jew could not have risen out of an attachment to locally derived values because Samaritans and Jews were traditional enemies. In recent history, we can find similar examples, where French, Belgian, Polish, Scandinavian, Japanese and German goyim risked their lives to help Jews during the Nazi era (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 131). Now, how should we consider such people? Are they strange and crazy human beings for going against prevailing values? To see things in this way is clearly unsatisfactory. Most of us have or are able to have an admiration for such actions. I am neither Samaritan nor Jew but I am nevertheless able to be moved by the actions of the Good Samaritan or by people who saved Jews. Although we cannot infer the existence of universal values from these examples, at the very least I think we can say there are some values that transcend the local. Starting from this point, let us now examine what Kant has to say on cosmopolitanism.

The basic nature of Kant's cosmopolitanism: Beyond restriction

Unlike a number of contemporary philosophers, Kant discusses elements of cosmopolitanism. Some philosophers have taken a more general approach to cosmopolitanism, exemplified by the work of Nussbaum, where the concept of cosmopolitanism is uncritically associated with 'justice' (p. 5). Kant's philosophy embraces the view that cosmopolitanism is not restricted to specific matters or things. In other words, it is not a means to an end precisely because a means is always restricted by an end. However, an end is also prescribed as it is and therefore it is in a sense restricted to an end.

In this regard, cosmopolitanism should not be seen only as a means or an end. Karatani indicates that the second form of the categorical imperative is especially helpful when it comes to thinking about cosmopolitanism in this context (Karatani, 2003, pp. 128–130).

[Categorical imperative, second form:] *So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means* (Kant, 1996a, p. 80).

Here Kant says that humanity must always be seen as an end in itself. At the same time, we should pay attention to the fact that Kant does not deny humanity as a means either. Human beings have dignity as persons, but I also cannot avoid dealing with my neighbors as someone who can, in fact, do something for me, that is, serve a purpose as a means. In this sense, Kant is realistic and never says that we should see humanity only as an end.

In order to get away from restrictive definitions of cosmopolitanism, we can say that there is closeness between cosmopolitanism and respect for humanity. I want to suggest that Kant's cosmopolitanism is not the same thing as the simple universal value that can be seen as an end in itself. It is more complex. Arendt notes perceptively that, in a Kantian context, human beings become the means to an ultimate end—cosmopolitan society (Arendt, 1982, p. 77).

KANT'S COSMOPOLITANISM

Cosmopolitanism in three dimensions

As we saw in part 2, cosmopolitanism has closeness with the idea of respecting the humanity of a person as both an end and a means to an end. Furthermore, Kant considers cosmopolitanism in three dimensions: (1) the individual, (2) public society, and (3) cosmopolitan society (Hirose, 2010). It is necessary to think cosmopolitanism in these three dimensions in order to consider how cosmopolitanism might actually come to be in our multicultural world. In this process, the individual is straightforwardly an end but she or he also becomes a means to realize the cosmopolitan society through public society.

1. Kant describes the individual dimension of cosmopolitanism here:

The opposite of egoism can only be *pluralism*, that is, the way of thinking in which one isn't concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world (Kant, 2007, p. 241).

Cosmopolitanism is described here through thinking about individuals as citizens of the world. The citizen of a cosmopolitan world does not adopt an egoistic approach. It is distinctive that the opposite of egoism is not altruism but pluralism. What pluralism means is that when we think of something by ourselves, at the same time we examine that thought from the other's position. Only through this process can we make a categorical imperative by ourselves and follow it.

2. We can find another cosmopolitanism that is grasped through the dimension of national or racial character. Kant writes:

The limitation of spirit of all peoples who are not prompted by disinterested curiosity to get to know the outside world with their own eyes, still less to be transplanted there (as citizens of the world), is something characteristic of them, whereby the French, English, and Germans favorably differ from other peoples (p. 411).

Here, the cosmopolitan citizen literally lives beyond the artificial boundaries of nations and is at one with the spirit of the world. Kant shows how we can transcend narrow interests and egoistic action. He also suggests that, insofar as they are cosmopolitans, the French, English and Germans are different from other peoples. The point is that cosmopolitanism is discussed here in a dimension of national characters.

3. In the end, cosmopolitanism has a mildly perfectionist quality.

In itself, it [cosmopolitan society (*cosmopolitismus*)] is an unattainable idea but not a constitutive principle. . . . Rather, it is only a regulative principle: to pursue this diligently as the destiny of the human race, not without grounded supposition of a natural tendency toward it (p. 427).

Intersection between teleological and pluralistic viewpoints: Toward cosmopolitan education

Now, I want to point out that although Kant describes cosmopolitanism in three different dimensions it should also be understood in terms of connection between these dimensions. Without improvements to public society, the cosmopolitan society can never exist. In addition, without reform at an individual level there can be no public society. Moreover, the idea of cosmopolitan society is bound up with a 'regulative principle' (Kant, 2007, p. 427) which constantly affects individual lives. As such, the process toward cosmopolitan society can be seen as teleological: (1) the individual → (2) public society → (3) cosmopolitan society. At the same time, these three dimensions are mutually sustaining.

The cosmopolitan individual is always plural. When human beings take a pluralistic viewpoint, they can relativize themselves in respect to the perspectives of other people and also in regard to dimensions (2) and (3). By following the dynamics of Kant's cosmopolitanism, the problem of a means and an end is rearranged within the relationship between teleological and pluralistic viewpoints.

IS KANT'S COSMOPOLITANISM STILL NATIVE AND SEEN AS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH?

We still need to examine the claim that Kant's cosmopolitanism is naive and that it assumes the existence of an absolute truth. We have already seen that cosmopolitanism should be regarded as both an end and a means and that it has three dimensions: the individual, the national, and the perfectionist. However, this does not mean that cosmopolitanism is an individual or national

character that can be pinned down and specified. Kant's cosmopolitanism is not identified with concrete ideas like modesty or justice. As we saw in the third section, Kant sometimes depicts cosmopolitanism by way of negation (for example, as an opposite to egoism or narrow-mindedness) without explaining precisely what it is. If cosmopolitanism is not concrete as such, then it could fall into even totalitarian modes of thinking because without a fixed definition, people can interpret cosmopolitanism any way they like. After all, should we think of cosmopolitanism as naive?

We can find some insights to this problem in Kant's posthumously published work. In this work, Kant explains that cosmopolitanism is bound up with an interest in humanity, the whole world, the origin of things, inner values and ultimate purpose (Kant, 1923, p. 517). We should pay attention to the fact that Kant does not say cosmopolitanism is these specific ideas, but that cosmopolitanism is rather *interest* in these ideas. From this statement, we can suppose that cosmopolitanism needs to be constantly formed and reformed through thought and action in pursuit of such ideas.

Furthermore, these ideas can be divided into three themes that correspond to the three distinct themes treated in Kant's critiques: (a) the epistemological object: the whole world and the origin of things; (b) morality: humanity and its inner value; and (c) the teleological end: ultimate purpose. To take interest in these three themes does not mean that one must blindly obey them as orthodoxy, but that one actively pursues them. In addition, taking an interest in these themes is to partake in philosophy which consists of epistemology, ethic and religion. Cosmopolitanism arises out of trying to think philosophically. Therefore cosmopolitanism has an aspect of the process of philosophizing that cannot be naive or an absolute truth because the process of philosophizing is constantly moving and not fixed without condition.

ARE ANIMALS AND PLANTS ALSO COSMOPOLITAN?

To close, I want to ask one more question: If cosmopolitanism is not restricted to certain things but is actually a dynamic movement, where exactly do animals and plants fit in? Are animals and plants also cosmopolitan? This question will help us to test whether or not Kant's cosmopolitanism is anthropocentric.

According to Kant, human beings are different from animals since the former have capacity to reason. He says, 'they [animals] have no reason' (Kant, 2007, p. 370) and 'irrational animals can manage provisionally, following implanted instincts' (p. 304). Therefore,

Among the living *inhabitants of the earth* the human being is markedly distinguished from all other living beings by his *technical* predisposition for manipulating things. . . , by his *pragmatic* predisposition. . . , and by the *moral* predisposition in his being. . . And any one of these three levels can by itself alone already distinguish the human being characteristically as opposed to the other inhabitants of the earth (p. 417).

If living beings do not have reason, they cannot manipulate things, act pragmatically or be moral. Animals and plants are living beings that completely obey their sensual instincts. This

challenges their inclusion into a concept of cosmopolitanism. However, we human beings have instincts too. Kant describes the human being as ‘an animal endowed with the *capacity of reason* (*animal rationabile*)’ (*ibid.*). Human beings are not mere animals but rational animals. In this respect, human beings share some of their nature with animals. Interestingly Kant regards animal nature as the first step to attaining goodness. He says that the animalistic predisposition of human beings is physical and mechanical self-love, that is, self-love without reason. Furthermore, he mentions three forms of concrete self-love: self-preservation, the sexual drive for the propagation of the species, and the social drive (Kant, 1996b, pp. 74–75). As such, human beings are different from animals or plants but they are not entirely so.

Moreover, as we briefly discussed in the third section, cosmopolitanism necessarily has the individual dimension in which pluralistic thinking is required. This pluralistic thinking can be derived from geographical one because especially in geography people need to think objects including animals and plants as they are in their own area. Accordingly, human beings also have a substantial connection to animals and plants when they try to obtain a pluralistic view. Although animals and plants are not able to become cosmopolitan directly, some of their elements infiltrate into human beings. Therefore, at least, we cannot exclude animals and plants from cosmopolitan.

CONCLUSION

Cosmopolitanism in Kant’s thought consists of teleological and pluralistic elements and manifests itself in dynamic movement. In addition, cosmopolitanism is not a static and naive idea but a regulative one, which can include animals and plants, and which affects our action constantly. Therefore, it can be an *active guide* that helps us to communicate and understand each other, and which can contribute to cosmopolitan education today.

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